



# Parnassus





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# Parnassus

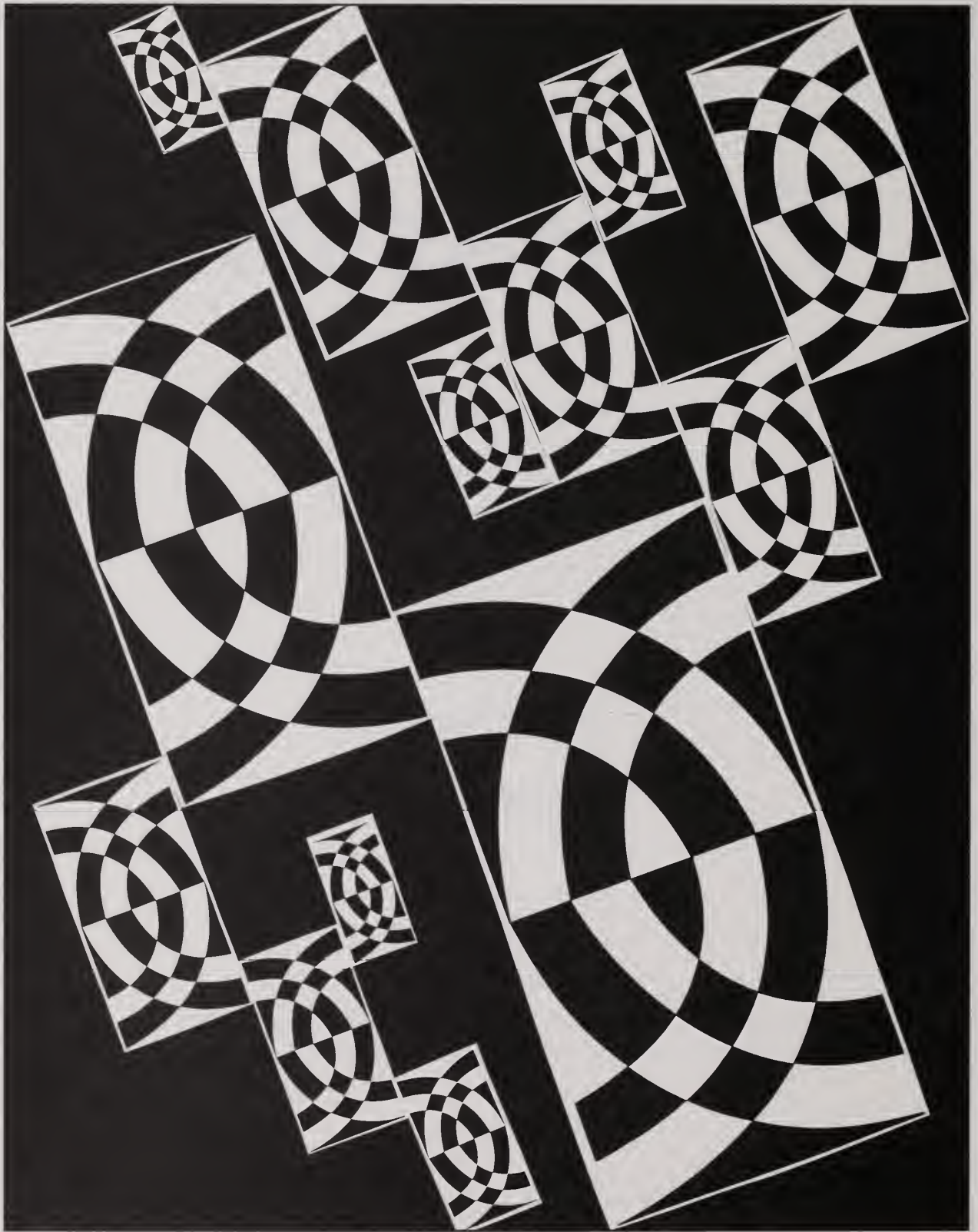
Inter-Arts Magazine  
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Spring  
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Parnassus is the name of the mythological mountain home of the nine muses who inspired humankind in the arts.

The policy of the editorial staff has been to select material for the magazine democratically. We have read each work submitted and viewed all artwork. We voted to determine eligibility: a majority vote for a piece meant publication. *Parnassus* provides an opportunity for new artists and writers to reach others; it's a showcase of Northern Essex Community College student creativity.





Karney Krikorian

# Parnassus

Spring 1995

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## Who Looks At The Moon

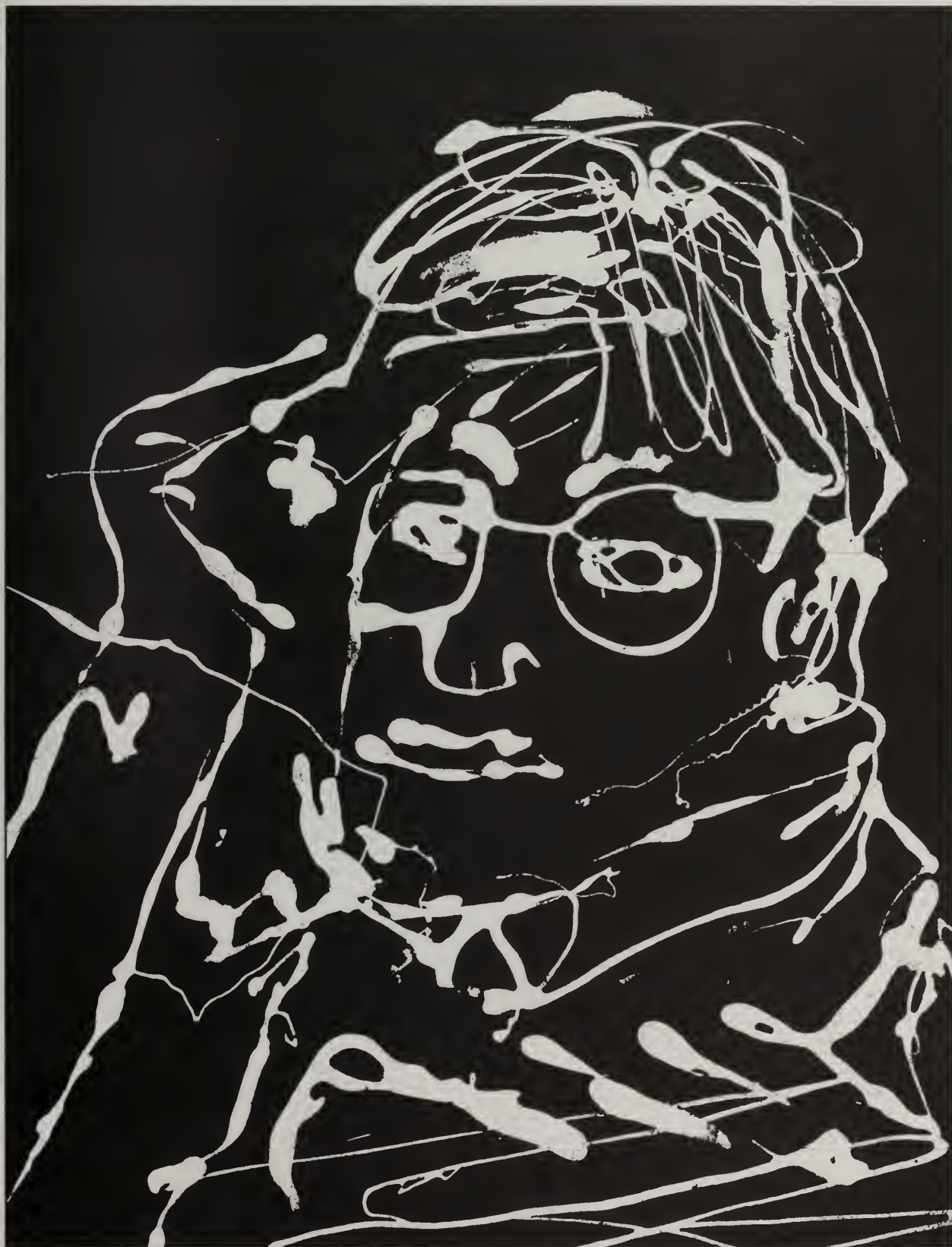
Old eyes see the moon  
as a reassuring lamp  
sending down light  
to guide hesitant footsteps.  
Snow accepts and reflects  
the bright light opening sight  
to bare bones of trees  
outlined, white on black,  
standing in soft shadows.  
Walk carefully, two dimensions  
have replaced sun's gift  
of color and roundness.

Other eyes see the moon  
as a prize and seize it  
violating infinity.  
Men did walk upon the moon  
leaving footprints in place  
in outer space,  
and planted a flag  
in lifeless, sterile dust.

Very young eyes  
reflecting the moon,  
face upturned, intent,  
concerned for day's light,  
at nightfall once asked,  
"Mama, what are all those  
holes up in the sky?"

**Donna Simpson**





Rich Marquis



Virginia Wadland



## The Humanistic Journey Into: The World of Paranoia!

The following reflects my own personal theory about the source and origin of the development of paranoia and I suggest a direct correlation as it pertains to the mental illness known as schizophrenia.

I have comprised a list of stimuli/stressors that people are subjected to and exposed to in their everyday lives. I would like for you to remain focused, concentrated, and very aware of your body's physical reactions, physiological responses, thoughts, memories, etc., while you read and allow yourself to experience the following list. Allow your imagination to freely associate and your body and mind to relax. Are you ready? Here you go!

Sun and moon are the eyes of the universe—God is watching you—he is omnipresent—the All Seeing Eye sees everything, even You—the Evil Eye is watching too so be careful! Might get ya!—there are eyes on all coins—the All Seeing Eye is even on the All Mighty Dollar!—the Eye of Horus—potatoes have eyes—eye of a tornado—eye of a hurricane—dice/snake eyes—hawk eyes—eagle eye—a 3rd eye—inner vision—guardians appointed to children to watch them through the night—snakes under the bed—ghosts—boogie men in the closet—skeletons in the closet—parents watch you—teachers watch you—parents who play “I’m going to get you” when you’re not even a month old—remember to always look over your shoulder because “I’ll be watching you”—Santa, his helpers, and the Easter bunny know if you’ve been bad or good from one year to the next because they’ve been watching you too!—you even watch yourself in the mirror—drinking a toast? Well, “Here’s looking at you!”—eyes are the mirror and the windows of the soul—“Look at me when I am talking to you!” (do you even care to make eye contact after hearing this for a lifetime?)—watch what you’re doing and where you’re going—I told you to watch me—keep reading. I’m not finished yet!—demanding eye contact as a method of control to make certain you’ve captured one’s attention—making eye contact lest be accused of avoidance—trance inducing eyes—hypnotic eyes—seeing eye to eye—don’t shoot till you see the whites of their eyes—eye spy—watch towers—Military order; the

enemy is out there even if you can’t see them so don’t be fooled—dependency/co-dependency; always keeping an eye on each other—the “Eyes of Texas are upon you” (jeeppers, a whole gosh darn state!)—tape recorders—camcorders—microphones—electric eyes—police in unmarked cars—2-way mirrors—snitches—moles—rats—rat finks—eyeballing—eyeballs—eyeglasses—sunglasses—x-ray vision glasses—crime watch—“I’ll have to keep an eye on you!”—If I were a fly on the wall—stalkers—peeping toms—serial killers—happy eyes—sad eyes—guilty eyes—eyes of no remorse (are you afraid to have others look into your eyes for fear of what might possibly be seen?)—let me look into your eyes, I want to see if you are lying!—the Eye of the Tiger!—eye of a needle—Eye Watch News—eye of a storm—Bull’s Eye!!!

GOTTCHA!

Welcome to the wonderful world of  
PARANOIA!

Are we SCHIZOPHRENIC yet?????????

Note: There is a need to fully comprehend the power of words, symbols, myth, legend, lore, and superstition, and the reality of the dilemmas presented along with them.

**Karen Lee Levesque**

## Two poems by Angelique Pinet

### Womb

There are times when a woman  
feels her sores.  
She feels them breathe  
as they voice their opinions on her soul.  
She feels them.  
And the snakes of her heart  
coil and tighten their grip.  
The boil of her sacred, ancient blood  
peels its way through her flesh  
and every pore, every opening,  
every sore  
is felt.  
Containment and retreat diminish.  
Her crystalline eyes, touched by exposure,  
swell in the presence of passion.  
She holds herself in the rapture  
of her womanhood  
and shadows the sound of her being.  
The snake vine.  
Entwine.  
She feels them.  
The snakes bite.  
Instantly she is captured by their beauty  
to divine her heart.  
Oceans of violent tears  
spew invisibly out of their shells  
and roll down her spine.  
She wanes.  
Soul stained—she delivers.  
She walks in the night of her wisdom  
and accepts the wind.  
She drinks from the Garden of Eden  
and love is all hers.  
Pale in the moon,  
twilight in the world,  
a woman always feels her pain.

### Rolling

Love  
comes to  
me  
in pebble-  
form.  
Gently,  
it tugs  
on my heart,  
and right  
then,  
I  
obsess.



Alex Bosse

## The Homeward Path

Mrs. Witham sat uncomfortably in the aged, white wicker chair on her porch, watching the world go by. She hated to sit out on the porch; she always felt as if she were on display. The house was so old, dusty, stuffy and empty that she hated to sit inside too. It did not really matter. The plain truth was that she hated everyone and everything these days; she would have been miserable wherever she was. Mrs. Witham was waiting to die.

Each day when she awoke, she would sigh in disappointment and hope fervently that it would be the last morning she would see. She would wash and dress, make dry toast and coffee and sit in the old, overstuffed, floral patterned chair by the window she still bothered to wash so that she could look out on the small park across the street. She would smile, watching the toddlers run to their mother's waiting arms; then the sadness and the futility would strike her, and she would let the curtain fall and sit in silence till noon, listening only to the steady ticking of the mantle clock. It endured the slow, empty passage of time along with her and answered her steady, quiet pulse with its own.

Ellen Witham's parlor was not like you may imagine it. Yes, there were the aged frames containing the old photographs, but beyond this Ellen collected nothing but memories—and books. The room was filled with her husband's lovingly crafted bookshelves; he had built shelf after shelf as her library increased over the years. These shelves contained no trinkets, no bric-a-brac; there was room only for the books, for the only friends Ellen called her own—Hawthorne, Thoreau, James, Twain, Poe, Shakespeare, Browning, Conrad, Tennyson and so many, many more. There was a special corner for the Bronte sisters, George Eliot and Mary Shelley and a quiet, sheltered corner for Miss Dickinson—her pages are so delicate and people can be so careless with books, you see. This was Ellen's true haven, her home within a home, her solitude and comfort.

Watching her now, hair grayed and dull, gathered carelessly from her worn and lined face, you would never imagine that the same face had once been sunny and gentle, or that her house had once been overflowing with laughter and love. It had been a face people called lovely

once, her home was a home others envied, filled with the kind of family everyone imagined when planning their future. She had two beautiful, happy, bright children who adored her and a husband who simply worshipped her. Her daughter, Catherine, had been sweet and shy, caring and obedient, the sort of daughter every mother hopes for. She was light and lovely and adored styling her hair in a hundred feminine fashions. Ellen Witham used to take special pride in shopping for the loveliest ribbons and ornaments for that long, shiny, honey-colored hair, and took special pleasure in bestowing these gifts on her beautiful child. Her fondest wish was to have enough money to take Catherine on a shopping spree at the dress shop in town, to let her buy every fancy, frilly dress her heart desired—but Ellen and James never had achieved that level of financial success.

Catherine had been a beautiful baby, all smiles and laughter, mischief and hugs. She lulled Ellen and James into a false sense of security about their abilities as parents, and when Catherine's brother was born it was brought home to them the truth of the adage that no two children are alike.

Edward Witham clung to his mother from the moment of his birth until two years of age, refusing ever to be separated from her and crying at the least suggestion of her parting from him, even for a moment. He was a fearful, over-sensitive child with great, large teary brown eyes which seemed always to be searching for some comfort, some reassurance from her. He was prone to mood swings and tempers, yet loving and affectionate when in a favorable mood. He was truly an enigma to Ellen, who cuddled him endlessly for lack of knowing how else to cope. He grew slowly, but was exceedingly bright.

Ellen loved him dearly. She thought her children good children; indeed, better than most. She felt sure they would benefit from her loving hand and sympathetic ear and therefore grow to be strong, confident, independent adults, secure in the knowledge that they were deeply and unconditionally loved.

Her marriage to James was a good one; strong and lasting despite the usual ups and downs of any marriage. He worked very hard; he loved her and the children with extraordi-



ary strength and passion. He truly lived for them—only his work and a passion for canoeing kept him from their side. He was a carpenter; his hands were heavily calloused and his back unusually strong. His waves of mahogany hair never seemed to gray with the passage of time; his hazel eyes never failed to reveal his kindness and inner strength. He always made Ellen feel safe, loved and well-protected. Although he was strong, he was gentle and never raised a hand to her even in the midst of the most heated argument.

James worked long hours and labored under the weight of heavy beams and panels day after day to provide for his own. On weekends, he would drive miles to find a suitable river and canoe alone; sometimes casting a line into the water but, more often, simply gliding along and enjoying the quiet and natural beauty of the river and the land. He said it was how he talked with God.

Ellen loved him with all her heart; he was her very own living Thoreau, though he didn't know it. He would not share her books; he spoke the language of wood and of the river, and heard no other call. Still the two were extraordinarily close; they enjoyed a special understanding of each other that no outsider could have guessed.

Ellen and James considered their home a safe haven; they furnished it with love and kept it as a kind of fortress against the world. Anger and mistrust were not allowed to pass across their threshold and into their realm. It was their castle—it was an illusion.

During those years, Ellen was sure she was the happiest woman alive, even if money was scarce and it seemed James was doing the work of three men.

During those years, Catherine had grown into a beautiful young woman; intelligent, confident and thoroughly independent. She was now a marine biologist, traveling extensively on research projects. When not traveling, she was usually found in her office at the Marine Institute where she was employed, writing research proposals or hiring new assistants. She had very little time for her parents. She was conscientious about holidays, birthdays and anniversaries and tried to call when not at sea or locked into work at the Institute, but this was increasingly rare.

Ellen and James were proud of her accomplishments and proud of the kind of woman she had turned out to be, but they missed her intensely, particularly Ellen, who physically felt a gaping hole in the flow of her home.

Edward was doing graduate work at the University, after which he hoped to attain a teaching position and bring his love of literature to a new generation. He had spent many hours in his mother's library while growing up and had learned to love her books as she did. For him, they were living, breathing souls, anxious to speak always to anyone who would listen; Edward had listened intently. As Edward matured he had become quite good at hiding his insecurities and fears behind his studious nature and many awards, but he had never quite felt as though he fit in through all his years as a student. He felt at home only in his mother's house, or in his books. But Ellen knew that even though Edward needed her more than Catherine did, it was yet a diminishing need, and the time would inevitably come when he would become as distant and untouchable as Catherine now seemed.

In these developing years, James had been her chief consolation; always there to remind her that he, at least, would always need her and that the movement of the children away from her and towards their own adult lives was natural and positive. In her mind, of course, she knew this to be the truth; but her heart told a different tale and was never entirely silent on the matter. If not for James, she was sure she should feel entirely useless; but James was there, steady and strong, ready always to comfort and uplift, to either chide gently or genuinely compliment her, always with the same phrase: "Ellen, you are a piece of work." When pleased with her, it was said always with a sly grin and followed by a bear hug. When frustrated, it was his harshest expression of his perplexity and helplessness.

James' unending patience and devotion was finally able to have its effect on Ellen; she became closer to him than ever and was, as a result, able to stop grieving the seeming loss of her children. She began to place more emphasis on her uninterrupted time with her husband. After all, they had waited and planned all of their lives for this time. The more time passed, the more comfortable and joyful she felt about their new situation.



Sam Howell

She considered her former depression an unavoidable transition from active mother to passive one, and allowed it to pass into the part of her mind reserved for the past, the memory collection.

For two years, she and James traveled on weekends, enjoying tranquillity and the comfort of each other's company, allowing their parental responsibilities to fade back into the neutral zone. Only remember that the castle was an illusion; the castle must crumble, the illusion must burst.

Catherine had embarked upon a research journey to Japan and Edward had begun his first semester of teaching part-time at the University when James died suddenly at work. His spirit had held up under the long years of overwork; his heart had not.

Ellen was never able to say good-bye; to thank him for all the years of passion and patience. He had been robbed of his best years; without her life-long companion and confidant, Ellen too, felt robbed of hers. The walls began to fall. Everything seemed to grind to a halt. Her world became surreal; voices and faces came and went—time lost all meaning. An hour could be as long as a day; a day might pass fleetingly before her eyes like a vision, without ever taking on any appearance of reality.

Edward came at once, devoting himself entirely to the care of his mother. Though he was half-drowned in grief himself, he knew intuitively that she would not survive the crisis of his father's sudden passing without constant, vigilant and tender care.

Catherine flew back for the services, but had to return to Japan at once, or risk losing her research grant. Friends and family came and went, offering condolences, casseroles and cakes; but it was all lost on Ellen. The only presence she was aware of was that of Edward, and that in a very distant and detached fashion. She thought briefly that she might be losing her mind, but the thought was not important enough to hold her interest. Ellen began to disintegrate.

She floated through sensations of cold, warm, and pain, only now and then touching down briefly to reality, then rebounding back to the safety of her cushioned world. Most of the time, she felt as though she were submerged deep below an unknown body of water; she

could actually feel the pressure and weight of the water bearing down upon her; dull, diffused sounds and sights passed dreamily in and out of her vision. She seemed to sink further down with each moment; the pressure ceased to affect her—she was simply floating, now.

"How extremely lovely," Ellen thought rather dispassionately. "How perfectly lovely." She would stay here forever. Only one thing troubled her, and that was the foolish, annoying light; that throbbing, blue-violet light just at the top of her field of vision. It seemed to be beckoning to her. She wished it would go away—it was really quite disturbing. And the light wouldn't cease—in fact, it became more insistent, and began to grow brighter and stronger. Ellen strongly resented the light now; it was ruining everything. Presently, in a flash of insight, she received the impression that the light was somehow connected with Edward. It reminded her of him; it seemed to be pleading with her for something, it was needy—it continued to grow and become more persistently vivid and invasive.

"Oh, I suppose if it is Edward I must go to him—I don't know why he won't just come to me. He always did call to me just so—I sometimes wondered if he weren't born without legs. But he is calling, so I must go to him."

She thought she would have to struggle a great deal to get up from the depths and she wondered if she had the strength; she felt quite weak. Instead, she perceived the light struggling towards her, pushing back the sea; it receded all around her and she thought she must be lying on a beach.

"Shipwrecked. I have been shipwrecked." She did not want to move. She felt heavy and exhausted again.

"Mother," Edward pleaded. "Mother, can you hear me? Please answer me, Mother!"

With great difficulty, Ellen managed: "Oh, what is it, Edward?" "The child never did want to let me rest," Ellen thought wearily.

"Oh, Mother, thank God! We thought we had lost you too!" Too? Reality came crashing down on Ellen like an immense mudslide; her eyes fluttered open and immediately snapped shut.

"That wretched light again; I knew it was bad—I knew I should have ignored it." She wished to be left alone.



"Ellen," a new voice intoned. "Ellen, can you hear us? Please wake up, dear!"

"Mrs. Anselm. . .," Ellen thought with annoyance, "...lovely—the whole bloody cavalry's here!" With effort, Ellen managed to open her eyes again, blinking from the light while her eyes slowly adjusted. When she was able to focus, she saw a teary-eyed, weary looking Edward hovering over her, with Mrs. Anselm behind him, wringing her hands in mock despair, waiting really for the next juicy tidbit of gossip to transport throughout the neighborhood.

Mrs. Anselm had lived next to Ellen for the past ten years and, although they had never been close, they got along well enough. This was chiefly because Ellen had learned to ignore her a very long time ago and to put up with her when she could not be avoided. Mrs. Anselm thought Ellen too aloof; Ellen had always found Mrs. Anselm, who refused to be called by her first name, a bit frantic and formal for her liking, but one must say she was a tolerable enough neighbor, that is if you did not find her constant habit of gossiping annoying. Ellen did. She thought it strange that Mrs. Anselm should be here now; she had no way of knowing that Edward had summoned her, at wit's end, when he had been unable to rouse her from her death-like slumber. Mrs. Anselm, not so emotionally connected to the event as Edward had been, and not so completely off-balance due to the recent death of his father, had been able to offer the practical advice that Edward ought, perhaps, to call a doctor.

Ellen ignored her and directed her gaze towards Edward. She had been hoping it was as an incredibly terrible dream; but no nightmare, no matter how realistic or terrifying, had ever hurt like this. She knew it was no dream. It was unbearably, disgustingly real.

"We haven't been able to rouse you for two nights and days," Edward said tearfully, trying his best to remain under control. "I have been so afraid, so very afraid."

"Yes," piped Mrs. Anselm, "you had us all quite worried!"

"All," Ellen thought, "who is ALL?" My poor, frightened son and a nosy neighbor, that's ALL. I am being spiteful—no, I am only tired—no, I am weary. No, I am beyond even that. I don't know what I am. I am lost. I am shipwrecked." Every fiber of her ached, her mouth felt stuffed with dead, dry autumn leaves. The

voices were too loud in her ears. Still, she felt an obligation to Edward. He looked as if he might tremble to pieces, more like the wide-eyed boy he had been at eight than the young man he was now.

"Can I get you something, Mother?" Edward queried hopefully. "Would you like some tea?"

"I would like a tall glass of iced water and I would like you to draw the curtains. The light is entirely too bright. And I would like you to open a window. It smells like death in here."

Edward visibly flinched at the last, but hurried off to do her bidding, glad to finally be able to help in some way.

"Well," Mrs. Anselm screeched (it seemed to Ellen), "You certainly gave us quite a scare, yes indeed. The doctor said it was most likely shock, and that we should just let you rest, but you had us worried, oh, yes indeed!" She said more, but Ellen tuned her out, and was aware only of the constant, annoying buzz, like a greenhead in summer that cannot be shooed away.

Presently, Edward returned with the water; it tasted like nothing less than the nectar of the gods to Ellen. As she sipped, she felt small currents of strength returning, and the cobwebs of fear and confusion began to clear from her mind. Mrs. Anselm was still chattering.

"My, it is a relief to see you sitting up and taking some nourishment. I do believe you are going to be all right after all. Yes, it certainly is a relief. Perhaps you would like some warm chicken soup? Would you like me to bring you some soup, Ellen? Ellen? Ellen? Would you like me to bring you some soup, I say?"

The mention of food brought home to Ellen that idea that she was, indeed, hungry—although not for Mrs. Anselm's inedible soup.

"I would like a steamed artichoke with lemon butter and a tin of smoked oysters, actually," Ellen stated.

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Anselm piped loudly. "Oh, I don't think that would be a good idea at all, no dear. I really think what you need is some nice soup."

"You can bring soup if you like, dear, but I won't promise to eat it. I have said what I would like, thank you."

Edward smiled for the first time in days.

"Father was right, Mother, you are a piece of work." He rose silently to go to the kitchen and

phone the market, determined to see that his mother got what she desired.

Mrs. Anselm cleared her throat. She seemed genuinely annoyed that her sensible offer of chicken soup had been so rudely refused, but Ellen was aware that the root of her problem was that the melodrama had ended, and that Mrs. Anselm was no longer a necessary participant in the play.

"Well," she began, trying her best to sound mortally wounded, "well, I can see I'm no longer needed. I'll just let the two of you be alone, then. Call me if I can be of any help." She kissed Ellen lightly on the cheek, said her good-byes to Edward, and left in a hurry, but not a visible huff.

Ellen felt a twinge of guilt, but she was not at all sorry to see her go. Edward's last words were still ringing in her ears, and a tear escaped her eye and rolled down her pale cheek. All was lost now. James was gone, irrevocably gone; the life she had envisioned for them as they grew old together had been brutally torn away from her—when she looked underneath at what remained, she saw nothing. The children were now grown adults; their need for her was minimal. Ellen felt set adrift without direction. What had been her life for so many years suddenly seemed to vaporize before her. She felt utterly useless.

At least as far as appearances were concerned, Ellen progressed over the next few weeks. Edward had been an excellent and devoted nursemaid, but he needed to return to his work. Ellen had noticed a definite and rapid change in Edward over the last weeks of her recovery; he seemed taller, older—more assured than before. Whether it was the release from his father's shadow, his success in bringing his mother through her "crisis," or just something that finally and inevitably happened due to the simple passage of time, Ellen could not say for sure. There was, though, a noticeable difference in his demeanor and bearing, and for this, Ellen was extremely grateful. It was a relief to know that Edward had, at last, come into his own. Ellen now knew she should very soon be dying. She felt death lurking behind the heavy drapes; she saw it dancing seductively just outside the range of her vision; she heard it whispering softly past her ears in the dark. It was not a threat-

ening or unwelcome presence; it belonged, and was not to be denied. Ellen Witham was simply about to be done with living; she knew it as surely as she had ever known anything before. Her job had been done.

She was equally confident that no one would understand this; particularly not Edward. He might panic; he would most definitely worry; he would most decidedly try to convince his mother that her death was not imminent and rush her off to a world of doctors and therapists. Ellen was now accepting of and even comfortable with the fact that she would not be among the living for very much longer; therefore, she saw no reason to share this knowledge. The beliefs she had held all of her life remained with her now and were enough to support her and ease her forward toward her own end.

And so, she sits now, uncomfortably, in the aged, white wicker chair on her porch—waiting to die. She wondered, then, how it would feel, but she knew she would find her answer soon enough. With this knowledge came a calm which suddenly took the sharp edges off of life which Ellen had always felt. She no longer felt lonely, or grief stricken, or worried about what would become of Catherine and Edward—she was certain that they would be fine. Now that death was something real and palpable, she no longer felt the pain or bitterness which had so recently assailed her senses and flooded her with despair.

She only wished she could convey her newfound peace of mind to Edward in such a way that he would understand and accept—but deep inside, she knew that wish could not come true. He must find the truth of it in his own way and in his own time. How could she explain what she had only just come to realize herself? The very young and vibrantly alive cannot see the value of death.

Catherine was so deeply immersed in her work that she would feel a passing tremor of grief and then move on. Catherine loved her mother, but her fierce sense of independence had long ago stopped Ellen from worrying about her.

Until recently, Edward had been her one real concern, but the change in him was so profound that she felt he would emerge the stronger from her passing; finally, totally his own





Todd Lamond



man, free from any emotional ties that might have kept him from reaching his full potential. If he were forced to finally let go of his mother completely, the boy could forever rest and the man could fully emerge, unfettered, to soar.

Ellen felt an immense surge of satisfaction. She knew with certainty now that all those youngsters with their new ideas were wrong. At the very least, their vision was limited. There is something incredibly fulfilling in having had a loving marriage and having raised beautiful, strong, whole children. She was extremely glad she had not chosen another path. It was a well-worn path, but for her, it had been the proper one—the only one.

With that thought, a searing, undifferentiated bolt of pain struck her between the eyes and took complete control of her consciousness. The porch ceased to exist; the breeze ceased to blow; the chair vanished from beneath her. For a moment, only the pain existed. Slowly, it radiated out and away, leaving a sense of numbness everywhere but in her fingers, which felt incredibly swollen and hot.

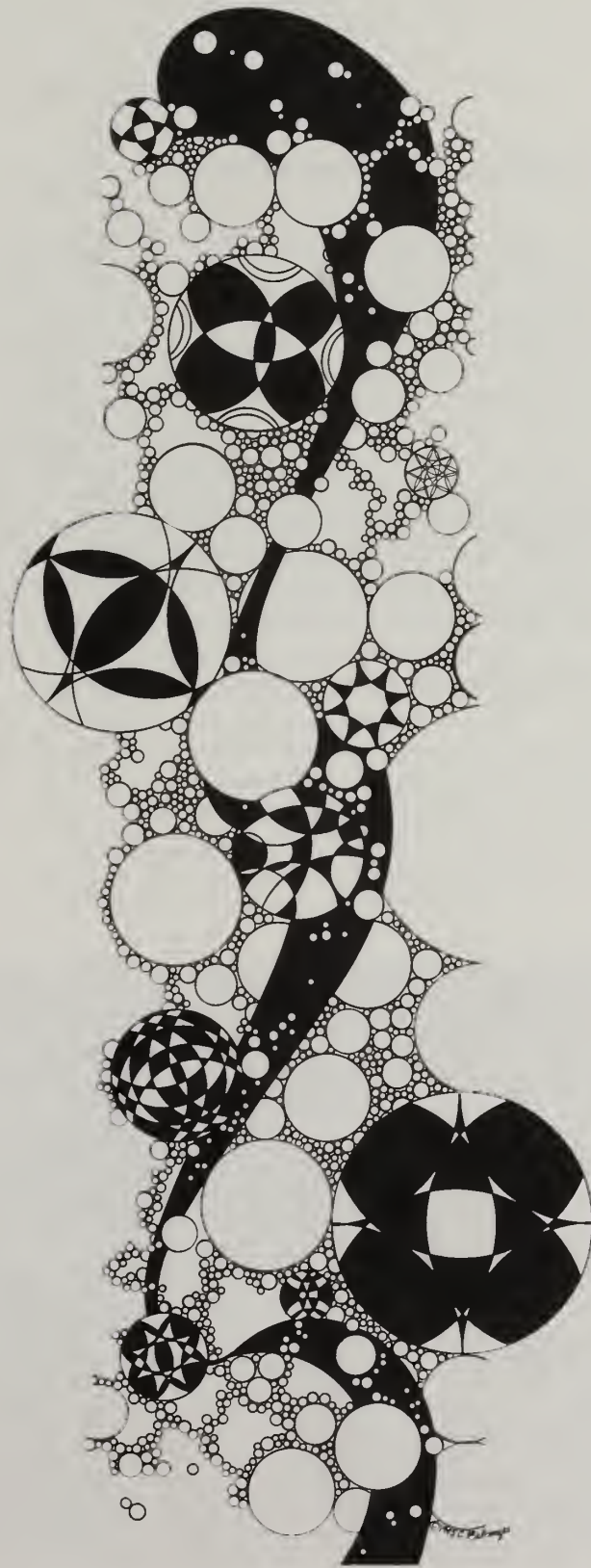
"So, this is how it begins," Ellen thought serenely. Rising softly and slowly from what seemed like a place behind her eyes came a dim, ethereal chorus which, at first, Ellen took for a choir of angels. As the syllables slowly coalesced and fused into recognizable words, Ellen realized it was a chorus of children, and their song was one she had not heard or thought of since she was seven years old.

"How very strange," she thought, as the mournful dirge roamed around and through her head. The song had frightened and disturbed her as a child; she had often wondered why she was taught it—but now it seemed totally appropriate. As her hands began to cool and become numb, she simply enjoyed the refrain of the tiny voices as they sang:

"Go tell Aunt Rhoady,  
Go tell Aunt Rhoady,  
Go tell Aunt Rhoady,  
The old gray goose is dead.

Died last Sunday,  
Died last Sunday,  
Died last Sunday,  
With aching in her head."

**Janet Clark**



Claire Belanger

## **An Early Morning Rain**

Rain drops are falling gently upon the calm and untroubled waters. They meld themselves into the satiny surface with sounds of soothing harmony. This wonderful and soft tenor reaches deep into the soul. Resonant yet delicate, a peacefulness ascends from the deepness of the water inspiring all the senses. A serenity and grace float above. The ethereal cry of a loon wafts its way from the far side of the lake. A grey is now imperceptibly painting the sky, the first hint of the sun's return. Now a ephemeral wind coaxes gentle ripples to dance their way up to the shore. A splash rips through the air as a fish breaks the surface vaulting for one more treat. Calm, the rain has stopped. A new day has begun.

**Peter R. Swift**



**Kate Lucia**

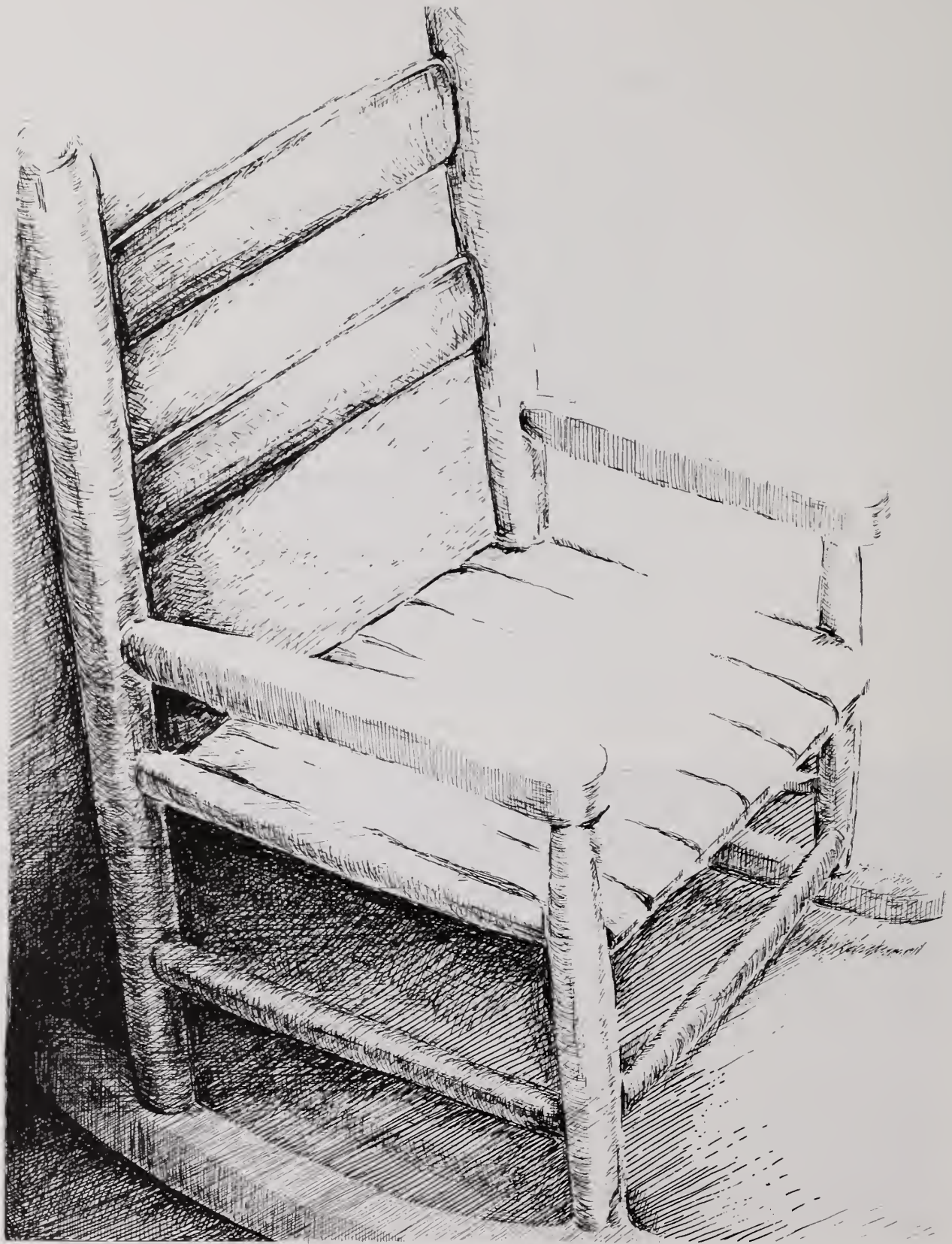


## Druid

"What manner of man are you"  
I asked, confused,  
As his form emerged from the wood,  
"Who walks as if the forest is his own,  
With thoughtful brow and earthly air,  
As if every twist of nature is his doing, his will?  
With an aura of understanding and wisdom,  
An instinctive knowledge of life,  
To read the flight of owls,  
Or the ripple of trout,  
Or the chatter of small beasts,  
Or the many songs of wind in splendid elms,  
Or the shifting of stones that bathe in tranquil brooks?  
Are you kind? Or evil perhaps?  
Does the forest fear you as most fear the forest?  
Were you someone before? A beggar? A thief? A holy man?  
Do the rains wet the lands at your bidding?  
Or are you the mighty thunderheads themselves,  
Rolling your layered inkiness to cover all?  
Or the swift zephyr that clears the day  
And carries the speech of animals on your back?  
Can you leave the groves, and the hills, and the lakes?  
Or do they protect you as you do them?  
Will they lay you to rest? Or will you not die?  
And remain here to wander the woods?

As the man turned to face me  
He smiled with a deep, cunning gaze.  
In moments he stood before me  
And as his robe swept the moss,  
Brown on green,  
His palm to my forehead he pressed,  
And was gone.  
I did not search.  
I would not see this man again.  
But over that breeze I heard him speak  
As I sometimes do still,  
Upon viewing the sky,  
Or the great mountains,  
Or the shifting snows,  
Or the reaching limb,  
Or the changing faces of the moon.  
"I am you now," he whispered  
"And we are the same."

**Dave Belleville**



Virginia Wadland



## Lookin' At The Water

I been drivin' around thinkin' that I'd sure like to know just what the Hell I'm supposed to do now. Fifteen years on the job—fifteen gorram years!—and they just say they don't need me no more. They say they're downsizin'. What the Hell does THAT mean? Downsizin' for Chris'-sakes. I guess it means I got no job. I guess that's what it means. It means I give them fifteen years of my life, never missed a day, and they give me a lousy handshake and a piece of pink paper. Pink no less.

Well, the whole thing stinks. Why'd they go and pick me anyhow? I mean they coulda got ridda Frankie, least he's got no kids to feed, and he don't do nothin' anyhow. I ran the whole line! What's he do but just sit there and talk about all his women—like we want to hear him—like we even BELIEVE him—and once in a while he pulls somthin' offa the belt that don't look right to him. Monkey could do THAT job. Yeah, they coulda got ridda Frankie alright. Or they coulda got ridda that dumb Bob guy—now there's a case for ya. Yeah, they coulda picked a lotta other guys. But they just stuck it to me. They probly got some smarty pants college kid comin' in to do my job. Like them kids know anything 'bout runnin' a line.

And now I gotta go tell Shirley that I got no job. That oughta make her day. That'll make it just perfect, yes sir! But I gotta go home. I been drivin' around now don't know how long. And God knows how long that front wheel's gonna hold up—all that rubbin' and grindin'—been meanin' to get that fixed the longest time now, And all this drivin' around ain't doin' me no good anyhow. Sure as Hell ain't gettin' my job back. It sure ain't doin' that.

Well, at least the kids are sleepin', that's OK then. I don't wanna hafta tell THEM their Daddy's got no job. I don't wanna do that. But Shirley, she's in the kitchen. "Hi," she says, "I kept your supper warm. I'm glad to see things are pickin' up down the plant. Good you could get some overtime tonight, we can sure use it. Billy's shoes are plain fallin' offa his feet and you know we kinda promised Janie a dress for that dance comin' up. Here, sit down, beans are in your plate and the dogs'll be just a minute. Want some bread with that? Oh, and the washer gave it up again this mornin' an' remember the last time the guy was here he said he couldn't fix it no more after that? Said we'd hafta break down and buy a new one. Here's you beer. So, what-cha think? Should I go down Earl's and see if he's got any used? I mean, I know we can't get new but sometimes he gets..."

"Dammit Shirley! We ain't gettin' no washer! What the Hell you goin' on about a washer for? We ain't got no money for no washer!"

I feel bad yellin' at her. She don't know. But I don't wanna hear it. A man can't even eat in peace sometimes without her goin' on and on 'bout some thing or other that I mostly don't care nothin' about in the first place.

"Sorry, Jimmy." She's talkin' sweet now. "I know you're tired. Said it to m'self when you first come in. Said 'Jimmy he look real tired to-night.' But now I'm thinkin' maybe, maybe when it slows down again at work, maybe we could take a little vacation, ya know? I mean Ma, she'd watch the kids, she's always at me to bring 'em down there anyhow, so it'd be just you an' me, Jimmy. We could go someplace nice, like rent one a them cabins and just sit all day and look at the water. I do so like to just look at the water. Sure, that's it, we'll just take us a little vacation is all. They can get on without you down the plant for a little while, can't they? Soon's it slows down again, I mean."

And me, I'm thinkin' yeah Shirl, they can get on without me OK. They can get on without me just fine. Told me so themselves. Told me just today on a lousy piece of pink—pink for Chris'-sakes—paper. And how am I supposed to tell YOU that with you goin' on and on 'bout shoes, an' washers, an' gorram vacations? Just how am I supposed to tell you now? Can you go on about THAT for a while, Shirl?

"I'm takin' a walk," I tell her. "Got some stuff to think on." And this ain't nothin' new 'cause I always like to walk when I'm thinkin'—'less I'm drivin', that is—not that I usually got much to think about, but when I do I like to go walkin'. I like to go up Parson's Hill and look down on the lights, or else I go down to the river an' then I can throw rocks in—never could skip the damn things—and I listen to 'em splashin' and it's a good kinda sound. Anyways, I'm headin' for the river tonight 'cause I just ain't got the strength to climb that hill, though I'd really rather go there. So I'm crossin' the bridge to get over where the bankin's flatter and it just hits me—a damn vacation! Now that was a helluva good idea, Shirl. I do need a damn vacation. But not no little one like you was talkin' on. No, sir. I need me a nice long vacation. One where I can look at the water a nice long time. Only it ain't so pretty now that it's all in my eyes like this, Shirl, it really ain't.

Linda S. Hopkins



## A Day At The Beach

Another day of ritual begins  
and I spend the morning in preparation.  
I approach my own self-made altar  
and spread the sacrificial shroud.  
Willingly I lie in waiting.  
The unforgiving beast rushes in from the east.

The fiery wing tips of the Phoenix  
brush against my tender cheeks.  
My thin lids offer little protection  
against the beast who inches closer.  
Heat from its outstretched form warms my own  
and I am wrapped with an invisible blanket of fire.  
My body cries out to flee, my soul in full agreement  
yet there is no attempt to break the ritual.

The great bird falters and  
for a moment  
a cool, sandy breeze blows past.  
It caresses and scratches my charred skin  
allowing my senses  
however briefly  
to feel relief.

The ritual continues on  
until the Phoenix grows weary.  
Slowly it abates toward the west.  
I open my eyes to glimpse the fading beast.  
Spots dance and weave in front of me  
giving life to many suns.  
The Phoenix dips slowly onto the ocean  
spraying great streaks of color into the clouds.  
Sand under my feet and thunder roaring in my ears  
I return home to soothe my pained form.  
I am tired and weakened,  
though I have done naught but to lie in the sand.  
I detest this social ritual  
yet I will rise the next day,  
and continue through the summer.

Cindy Clouse

## Tú

Contigo junto a mí fue creciendo un setimiento  
que nunca había conocido, un sentimiento llamado  
Amor.

Encontré tu mirada y tu sonrisa llenas de luz  
que iluminaron todo mi ser.

Tengo todo cuando estoy junto a ti, me has  
enseñado el significado de la felicidad. Te llevo  
dentro de mí muy profundamente, pues estás en  
mi aun si estás ausente. Decir tu nombre hace que  
te extrañe aun si estás conmigo.

Cuando esteas conmigo, siento la humedad de  
tu cuerpo junto al mío, me pierdo entre tus brazos  
y conozco la eternidad, una eternidad de la cual no  
quisiera regresar jamás.

Tu eres mi prisión, pero más que todo mi  
libertad. Tu eres todo para mí, todo y mucho más,  
eres mi razón, mi verdad, mi ilusión, mi único y  
verdadero amor. No importa lo que hagamos, no  
importa donde vayamos, siempre nos amaremos.

Lo más especial en mi vida eres tú. Te Amo!!

Rosario García



Sherry Whitaker

## The City

I look out my window  
and observe  
a boy of eight  
bouncing his ball  
against a brick wall  
my gaze is interrupted  
by a thought...  
What a peculiar place  
to put a tree...  
awkwardly thrust  
between the pavement  
trying to blossom  
and to grow  
I notice then  
shadows of grey  
quickly walking  
to their journey's end  
no smiles  
no words of  
"hi, how's your day"

The city  
is a strange place  
fast paced,  
unfriendly at times  
Yet, espy  
Mother Nature  
discovering a home  
in the corner cracks  
of cement  
a patch of grass  
grabs hold

Sometimes the city  
can swallow  
you whole  
No sign of things  
natural  
Steel, Glass and Brick  
are the landscape  
and then a thought  
a glance out  
your window  
and pause...  
What a peculiar place  
to put a tree.

**Lyn Thomas**





Kate Lucia



Todd Lamond



## The Wizard's Tower

"By the stars, the Wizard is in a rare mood tonight."

"Yes, I would not want to be the guard who falls asleep at his post this night. Klakta will peel off the man's hide to make his next pair of boots!"

The taller of the two shadowy figures conversing in low tones on the parapet above Gaalfa's nodded vigorously, "And do the job of skinning him in person for the joy of it."

"Shhh, we must be careful what we say, Hargon. It is said that he makes himself invisible and roams the halls at night. Were he to hear us, it would be our hides that next graced his massive feet."

The two guards resumed their patrol of the Wizard's lair. They moved towards a massive wooden door at the end of the parapet, glancing nervously about as if to somehow spot their master's shadow in the pale moonlight. Gaalfa smiled in the darkness.

"There is much fear in the air tonight," he thought. "It may be that I will be able to turn it to my advantage."

He waited in the shadows to hear the dull thud which signaled the close of the door far above his head. From his pouch he pulled a stout piece of rope with a small loop in each end. He slipped a hand into each loop and swung it back over his head. Peering up in the darkness, he could just make out the shape of a stone dragon's head protruding from the wall directly above him. He swung the rope back over his head swiftly with both hands. It made a silent graceful arc and landed around the gargoyle's neck. With a quick tug he anchored it amongst the stony scales and began to pull himself slowly up the wall.

High in the topmost chamber of the tower a tall blue-eyed man looked up suddenly from the parchment that was unrolled on the table in front of him. He cocked his head, seeming to listen though the only sounds to be heard had been the sound of harsh breathing from the huge creature who filled the western corner of the room with her chilly presence.

"Hark, he comes, Knerr." The icy eyes turned towards the dragonbird. "I have waited many seasons to lure him back to Vorta. Now it is he who will bow his head to me."

"Yes, Master, it will undoubtedly be so," Knerr's raspy voice filled the chamber as she raised her massive head up towards the window beside her.

"No, do not look down now, my pet." The Wizard spoke quickly. "Soon enough he will be in our hands and you will see the end of the Sage of Kolta." He rose from the table and shook out his long scarlet cloak. "For now I must leave you and return to the lower chambers to welcome our guest."

A low rumble sounded from deep in the dragonbird's scaly chest. Her purple eyes flashed in the torch light.

"Remember Master, you promised to let me have his heart."

"Have I ever broken a promise to you? Have patience and you may have all of him except for his hands. Those are mine."

The bird shifted, her large wings scrapping the stony floor. She resumed her curled up repose, her large beak nuzzled against the black scales that covered all her body but her wings; content with her master's assurance.

On the floor below, Gaalfa coiled the rope and returned it to his pouch. Something was amiss, he felt it but couldn't name it. He had climbed up and followed the same route into the tower as the nervous guards. The halls were dimly lit with torches placed at intervals along the walls so that the light from one faded almost into darkness before the glow from the next began. The walls were punctuated with irregularly spaced wooden doors, some closed and others open showing black voids of shadowy moonlit chambers only sparsely furnished with tables, benches and a few sleeping platforms. It was quiet, too quiet. Gaalfa closed his eyes in the deep shadows between the torches, willing his mind to unravel the puzzle his senses had presented to him.

"I must be getting too old. Perhaps I should have come through the tunnels that start by the far side of the stream even though the moonlight bathed the whole field." He stroked his chin thoughtfully in the half-light that came through the high window in the room behind him.

"The old borderwatchers never expected the wizard to fell the giant lag trees that lined the stream. It is to their credit that even without the



trees Klakta appears not to have found the entrance. The stones that mark it are still there, undisturbed amongst the tree stumps. It may prove to be a good way to leave this evil place later, nonetheless."

There was a sudden rush of cold air and the crash of wood and iron on stone as the next chamber door to the right behind him flew open. Gaalfa turned slowly to face the tall, caped figure silhouetted in the door-way.

"Welcome to my hearth, Gaalfa." Klakta turned slightly, clapped his hands and the room glowed brightly with torch light. "I have been waiting for you. It is a long way across the valley. You must join me for some refreshment."

The wizard moved quickly towards the unlit hearth but before he could bring his hands together, he heard a sharp snap close by his shoulder and flames burst forth from the pile of lag wood. He whirled to face a smiling Gaalfa.

"Your tower is somewhat drafty for an old man such as myself, Klakta. You will, I hope, forgive my presumption in lighting the fire for I was chilled.

The wizard's answering smile was tight and did not match his flashing eyes.

"Of course, Great Sage, you are my guest and I would never deny a guest any comfort in my home."

He reached up beside the hearth and pulled the iron ring that hung on the wall. In the distance Gaalfa heard a gong.

Almost before the sound had died, the flushed face of an older man in a guard's uniform with a scarlet insignia of a captain on his tunic appeared in the door-way.

"Bring us wine and then tell Hargon to come to us at the end of his watch so that he might escort my guest to his chamber." He turned to Gaalfa. "You will, of course, spend the night. It is much too far to return to Kolta until daylight." His voice positively dripped with sarcasm.

The guard departed with only a curt nod to his master and a puzzled glance at the old sage.

Gaalfa walked closer to the hearth and rubbed his outstretched fingers together in the warmth of the flames. "I gladly accept your generous hospitality. It has been many years since last I slept in this tower." Amused green eyes met icy blue. "It will be good to rest inside; warm and safe from the night beasts." He carefully removed his outer cloak and slowly folded it up and placed it on the bench that faced the hearth. He turned back and saw the wizard staring down at his visitor's gnarled hands in apparent fascination.

**Linda Herrera**

## **I Am**

I am the child.  
I am forever eager to please.  
I avoid conflicts at all costs,  
regardless of the price to be paid.  
My eyes are wide with apprehension.  
Acceptance is my ultimate goal.

I am the student.  
I am anxious to learn.  
Questions? Always. Answers? Sometimes.  
My mind fills like a sponge,  
but I make sure to wring out the unnecessary  
and absorb the essential,  
and then remember.

I am the adult.  
I have rigid, determined ways.  
My mind is set. No compromise will be accepted.  
My way. Do it. Now.  
I will not take "no" for an answer.  
Or, will I?

I am the woman.  
I have many, many sides.  
You may never see my complexity,  
but it is there.  
I am tender, I can be delicate.  
Yet my strength may surprise you.  
Do not be fooled.

The child, the student, the adult, and the woman  
all very different entities—one identity  
Me.

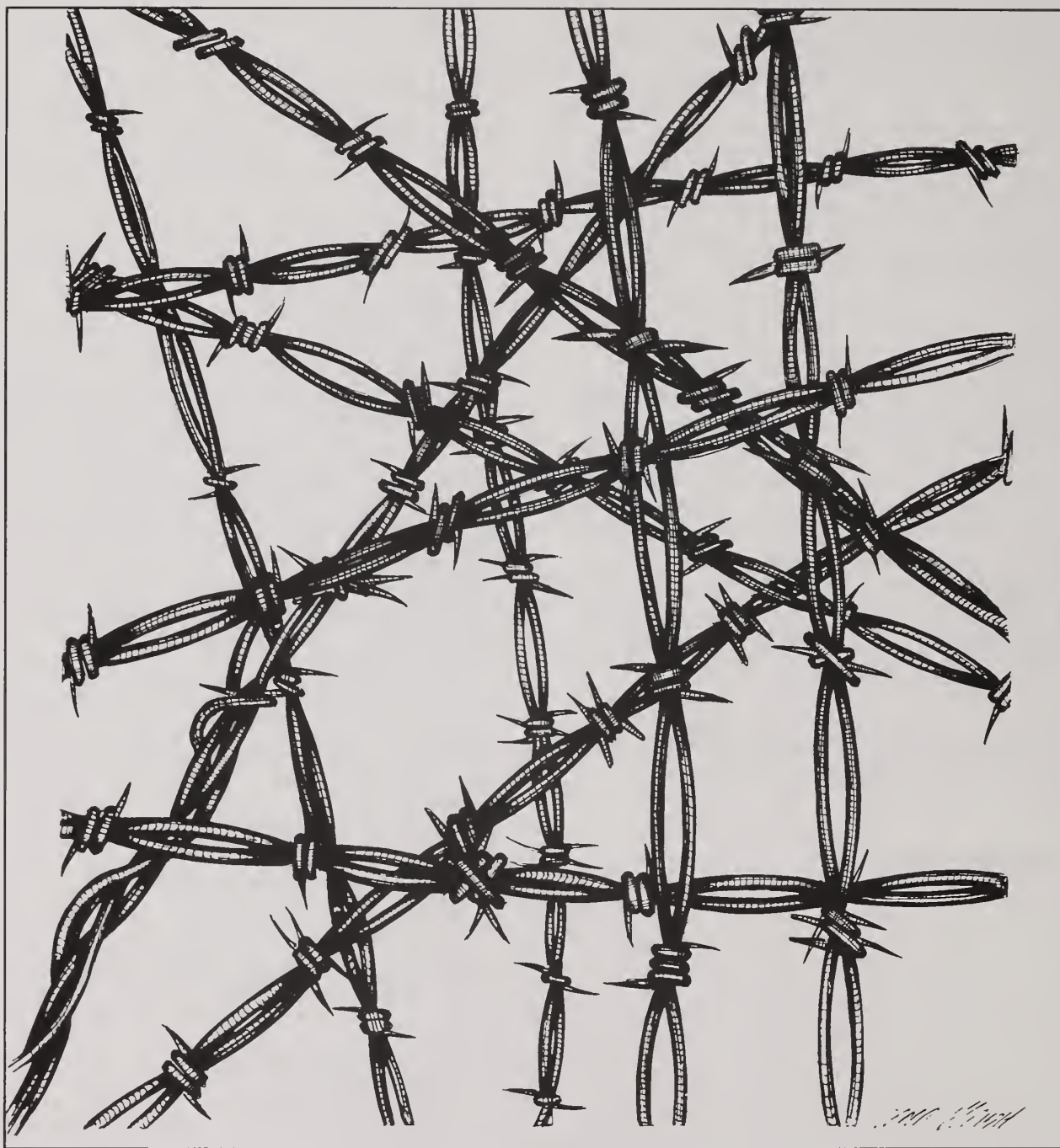
**Michelle E. Varras**

## **Mother-Child**

A strong desire for freedom,  
intolerance for in-utero boredom;  
Burst forth with great impatience.  
Clearly a mind of her own  
and determined to stand alone;  
Disrupting cosmic laws and those of science.  
Defender and protector of her sister,  
had she really left  
we would have sincerely missed her.  
Tinker toys, Lincoln logs, erector sets,  
skateboards, bicycles, and crazy foam,  
this same little girl made a house,  
"No place like home."  
She's taught me through the years  
about motherhood;  
I made every effort to learn from her,  
all that I could.  
A child...A teacher...A protector;  
A little girl with strength...A tender heart,  
and a strong desire for freedom.

*Dedicated to my daughter, Sandra*

**Karen Lee Levesque**



Dana Walsh



## **The Door**

She noticed, first, the green-brown weeds,  
Their spindly fingers stretching upward,  
Straining through the crumbling surface and  
Rising in striking poses above the jig-sawed plane  
That was, long ago, a sidewalk.

Warily leaving and locking her car, she stepped  
Gingerly across this garden of neglect,  
Clutching her small leather bag to her chest  
As though the weeds themselves would reach up  
And greedily snatch it from her grasp.

No one watched as she climbed the rickety riser to the porch,  
Catching, for a fearful moment, the heel of her shoe,  
In the open mouth of a time-worn, broken board.  
Crossing the threshold, she entered the dim hallway  
That led to the scarred and peeling door.

Shreds of wallpaper, long faded, clung to the walls,  
Not tightly—a tentative grip, as if,  
Though weary of holding on, they feared letting go  
Lest they, too, be trampled to dust beneath callous feet  
And be gone forever, not even a memory.

Shielding her nose from the ghosts of a hundred odors,  
She raised her hand to knock, but it would not be.  
A soft thud—a cat leaping from the railing.  
Startled, she turned and fled, leaving,  
She never felt the warmth or heard the laughter  
Trapped inside, behind the silent door.

**Linda S. Hopkins**

The sky is glowing  
as the white butterflies are soaring with the wind

The river is roaring  
as colors flow and dance in the crashing waves

The hills are rolling  
as the green grass sways like an ocean

All are merging and weaving  
like a fine woven quilt

Todd Lamond



M\*Carthy

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